

Appl. No. 10/575,094
Amendment dated July 1, 2009
Reply to Office Action of April 20, 2009

REMARKS

In the April 20, 2009 Office Action, claims 1, 2, 4, 8, 11, 12, and 18 stand rejected in view of the prior art, while claims 3, 5-7, 9, 10, 13-17, 19, and 20 were indicated as containing allowable subject matter. No other objections or rejections were made in the Office Action.

Status of Claims and Amendments

In response to the April 20, 2009 Office Action, Applicants have amended claims 1 and 11 as indicated above. Further, Applicants have amended claims 1, 4, 7-9, and 11-20 for clarity and to correct errors discovered upon review. Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for this indication of allowable subject matter and the thorough examination of this application. Thus, claims 1-20 are pending, with claims 1 and 11 being the only independent claims. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims are respectfully requested in view of the above amendments and following comments.

Interview Summary

On June 30, 2009, the undersigned conducted a telephonic interview with Examiner Fristoe, who is in charge of the above-identified patent application. Applicants wish to thank Examiner Fristoe for the opportunity to discuss the above-identified patent application during the Interview of June 30, 2009.

Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102

In item 3 of the Office Action, claims 1, 2, 4, 8, 11, 12, and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,339,883 (Drake). In response, Applicants have amended independent claims 1 and 11 to define the present invention over the prior art of record.

In particular, independent claim 1 has been amended to recite that the seal structure forming part directly contacts a first tapered part of the nut member when the female thread part and the male thread part are threaded together. Claim 11 has been similarly amended to recite that the seal structure forming part directly contacts a first tapered part of a piping, and has also been amended to recite that the seal structure forming part and the second tapered part are configured to sandwich and to press a portion of said first tapered part of the piping in a state so that the first tapered part directly contacts the second tapered part, and the protruding portion directly contacts another portion of the first tapered part.

As seen in Figures 2 and 3 of Drake, Applicant respectfully asserts that Drake fails to disclose or to suggest a seal structure forming part of the main body that directly contacts a first tapered part of the nut member or piping.

Applicants respectfully asserts that this structure is not disclosed or suggested by Drake or any other prior art of record. It is well settled under U.S. patent law that for a reference to anticipate a claim, the reference must disclose each element of the claim within the reference. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1 and 11, as now amended, are not anticipated by the prior art of record. Withdrawal of these rejections is respectfully requested.

Moreover, Applicants believe that dependent 2, 4, 8, 12, and 18 are also allowable over the prior art of record in that they depend from independent claims 1 and 11, and therefore are allowable for the reasons stated above. Also, the dependent claims are further allowable because they include additional limitations. Thus, Applicants believe that since the prior art of record does not anticipate the independent claims 1 and 11, neither does the prior art anticipate the dependent claims.

Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections.

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Allowable Subject Matter

In item 4 of the Office Action, claims 3, 5-7, 9, 10, 13-17, 19, and 20 were indicated as containing allowable subject matter. Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for this indication of allowable subject matter and the thorough examination of this application. In response, Applicants have amended claims 1 and 11 to overcome the prior art rejections.

Prior Art Citation

In the Office Action, additional prior art references were made of record. Applicants believe that these references do not render the claimed invention obvious.

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In view of the foregoing amendment and comments, Applicants respectfully assert that claims 1-20 are now in condition for allowance. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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